Extension Service
West Virginia University.

Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Winter Power Failure on the Farm

Protecting Poultry and Livestock During a Winter Storm Power Failure

- Ventilate shelter. Do not close buildings tight to conserve heat because animals could suffocate from lack of oxygen. Because oxygen eventually will be used up in mechanically ventilated production facilities, clear ice and snow from all vents. Then open vents to facilitate natural air flow.
- Poultry facilities should be equipped with knock-out panels for emergency ventilation.
- In dairy facilities, open door or turn cows outside.
- Provide water. All animals, especially cattle, need plenty of water during cold weather. It may be possible to drive your water pump with a small gasoline engine and a belt. Otherwise, you will need to haul water.
- If you have an outside source of water, cattle can be turned out to it. Be sure to place sand or other gritty material on icy feedlots to provide good footing.
- Whatever the source of water, watch that it remains unfrozen so animals can drink it. If no water is available, dairymen can feed cows their own milk as a last resort.
- Provide heat. Use camp stoves and heaters as emergency heat sources for brooders. Plan ahead to have this equipment ready when needed.
- Provide feed. Animals need extra energy for body heat during severe or prolonged cold weather, especially if they are outside without shelter. Mechanical feeders will be inoperable during a power failure. Provide for emergency feeding procedures. Pelleted cake or cake concentrate may be used for emergency feed.

Protecting Equipment During Winter Storm Power Failure

- Unplug or turn off all electric equipment to prevent damage when power is restored.
- If you use portable space heaters for supplemental heat, close off the fuel valve as soon as possible after power is interrupted. On models not equipped with safety shut-offs, and especially on some models with gravity-fed fuel systems, fuel continues to flow even when the burner is inoperative. An explosion or fire can result when power is restored.

Adapted from resource material developed by the University of Wisconsin Extension Service entitled "The Disaster Handbook for Extension Agents"